



**PRODIGAL**

**CHURCH**

**SERIES:** PRODIGAL CHURCH

**DATE:** SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11TH, 2020

**SPEAKER:** CRAIG VERNALL

**SERMON TITLE:** HATS AND HAIRCUTS

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

**Opening Question:** What fashion choice did you make in your younger years that you now regret? Feel free to send in pictures!

**Can we be in the culture but not of the culture?**

This is the question that's challenged every Christian community since the forming of the Church at Pentecost. Over centuries the Church has responded in probably all conceivable ways. From her it's living solitary lives, monastery life through to Christian politicians engaging in public life with Jesus-centered values.

In chapter 11 we find Paul writing to the Corinthians about what he contends to be a cultural imperative. An imperative is something that's absolutely essential.

In the cultural setting of Corinth, the way people wore their hair was very defining. Because of the different Roman and Greek pagan cults that were present in the city. People were drawn to dress in ways that linked themselves to various gods by what they wore or how they wore their hair.

In Corinth there appears to be a fashion statement that saw a confusing of the gender. Men were wearing their hair long and women cutting their hair short or shaving their heads.

What we know is that fashion changes over time. A quick glance back through history will show that men have worn their hair at different lengths for different reasons with the length of one's hair in no way indicating any gender confusion. In fact, the Old Testament Nazarite vow saw men not drinking alcohol or cutting their hair at all. Samson

was a Nazarite. Therefore, Paul's imperative to the Corinthians about the way they wore their hair was bound in time to the social messaging that was being given by the values associated with the fashion of the day.

Paul's references to the order of creation was done to add strength to his argument that men and women within the church shouldn't be confusing the gender that God gave to them. So, let's read below these verses.

*"I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head. <sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. <sup>6</sup> For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.*

*<sup>7</sup> A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup> neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.*

*<sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, <sup>15</sup> but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God."*

Out of context we read this passage at face value. Which leaves us being clearly told that hats, veils and long hair are required for women to please God and short hair is required for men.

**Q1. How many of you were raised with this idea: That women needed to wear hats in church? How did you see this change over time?**

It's easy to assign this passage to a time and place that has no relevance to the church anymore. However, there are principles that needs to be held onto for the church to be healthy.

Separating ourselves out from society and ensuring that the dominant culture doesn't set our values is always important.

**Q2. How do the clothes we wear make statements about ourselves? What do our clothes say to others or are clothes essentially neutral?**

**Q3. In keeping with this how do we apply what Paul wrote to Timothy about clothing and fashion?**

*"I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, <sup>10</sup> but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God". **1 Timothy 2:9-10.***

Of course, we need to always remember that there is an overriding value that Paul is wanting to also preserve. That is the believer's freedom. This of course creates a tension when it comes to freedoms such as fashion and what we wear. Remember that the gospel has given people a freedom to worship and live under God without submitting to cultural imperatives.

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. "No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. **1 Corinthians 1:23-24.**

**Q4. When it comes to what we wear, be that our clothes or our hairstyles how do we “seek the good of others”?**

## **WOMEN IN WORSHIP.**

Another part of this passage that needs our reflection is the permission that Paul gives to women to pray and prophesy. *“But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head- it is the same as having her head shaved”* 1 Corinthians 11:5.

**Q5. Can you see how easy it is when reading this passage to focus upon the imperative that Paul has put in place about women’s hair and coverings and miss the early part of the verse that encourages women to pray and prophesy? Why do you think that is? (Prophecy in the early church would include exhortation and teaching which is perhaps a wider view of how we view prophecy today)**

Furthermore, after Paul expounds the distinctions between men and women from the Genesis perspective. Paul then summarizes his explanations with a statement that affirms mutuality and equality between women and men.

*“Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.”* 1 Corinthians 11: 11-12.

What we find within these instructions from Paul, appears to be all about hats and haircuts. However, a little digging reveals some real gems about the value and equality of both men and women. With these values being radically different to the way Greeks and Romans valued and treated women, we conclude that Paul took Jesus affirmations of women and locked them into the culture and practices of church life.

**Q6. How and in what ways did Jesus affirm the role of women?**

## **FINALLY:**

What did Paul mean when he said “It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels”.

Firstly, Paul is asking women to take responsibility for the way they wear their hair. Which is not very complicated to understand. However, it’s the 4 words “because of the angels” that leaves us wondering.

Bible commentators seem to agree mostly around the idea that angels are always present during times of worship. Therefore, the suggestion is that angels who are present during a worship service are being acknowledged by Paul. For what reason we cannot be sure. But maybe a reminder that we don’t worship alone and our worship has an eternal and spiritual quality to it. Perhaps...!? It’s another head scratcher!

## **END YOUR TIME TOGETHER WITH PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER.**